

The Word



JANUARY 2022



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The Word, January 2022



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The Word: Truth

Truth is important. We have seen in the last year just how important. Misinformation about Covid19 spread like wildfire on social media. Imagine if we had all doubted Coronavirus actually existed. Or if everyone had believed the vaccines were a trick. How would that have affected our behaviour? No doubt countless more lives would have been lost. World leaders have worked hard to convince people that their scientists are telling us the truth (as much as they know it to be), and that vaccination is the best path forward.



The Bible places a lot of emphasis on truth. Think of all the times just in Genesis alone where disaster follows deceit. Truth is needed to bring life and freedom (John 8:32, John 14:6).

So, how can we be sure we are finding truth, rather than what we want to see? And is what we believe the only important thing? What impact should truth have on how we live?

In this issue we will touch on these big questions, and how truth should impact our everyday lives.

With love,

Becky Lewis

THE TWO WITNESSES OF PSALM 19

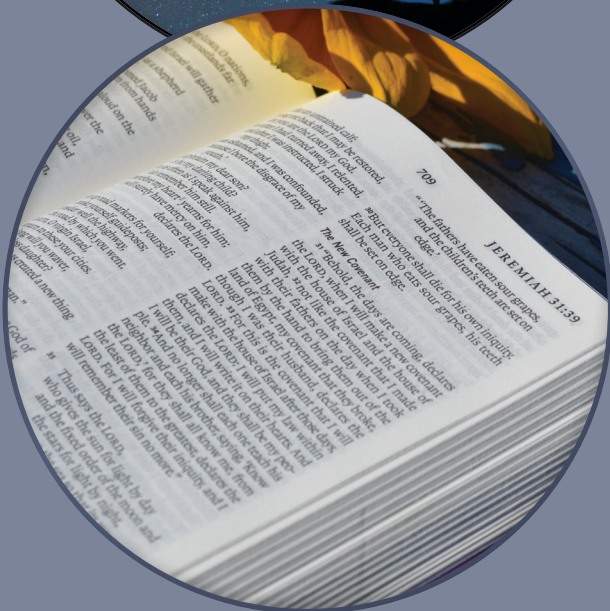
In the Law of Moses, two or three witnesses were necessary to establish the truth about something (Deuteronomy 19:15).

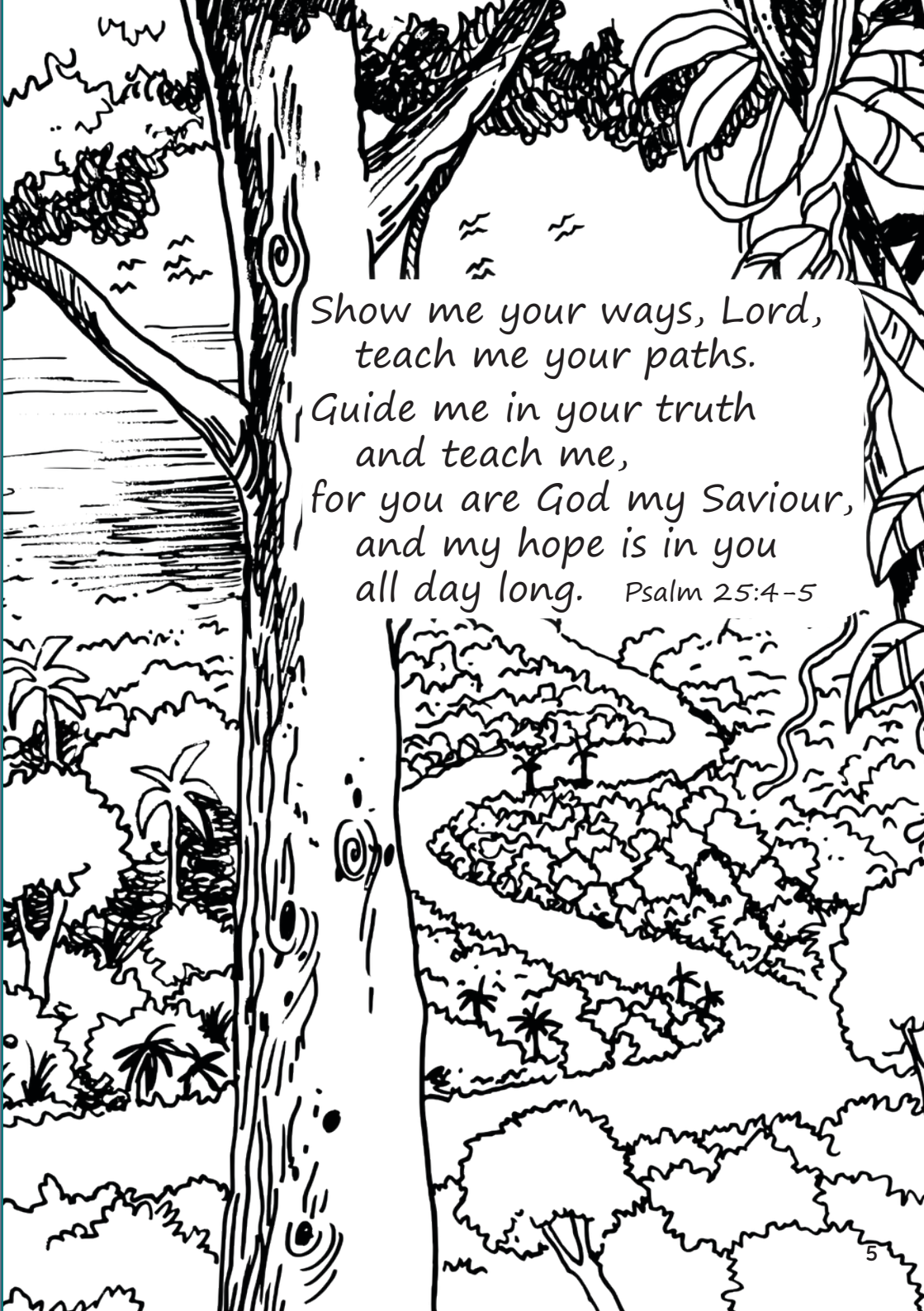
Psalm 19 presents two witnesses proving the greatness of God:

1 The heavens (verses 1-6). The precision and beauty we can see in the skies must have been caused by a powerful, awe-inspiring Being.

2 God's word (verses 7-11). It's wise and trustworthy, giving purpose and joy to those who follow it. So it must have come from an all-knowing, caring Being.

Because of these two great witnesses, the Psalmist is confident he can trust in God – his Rock and Redeemer.

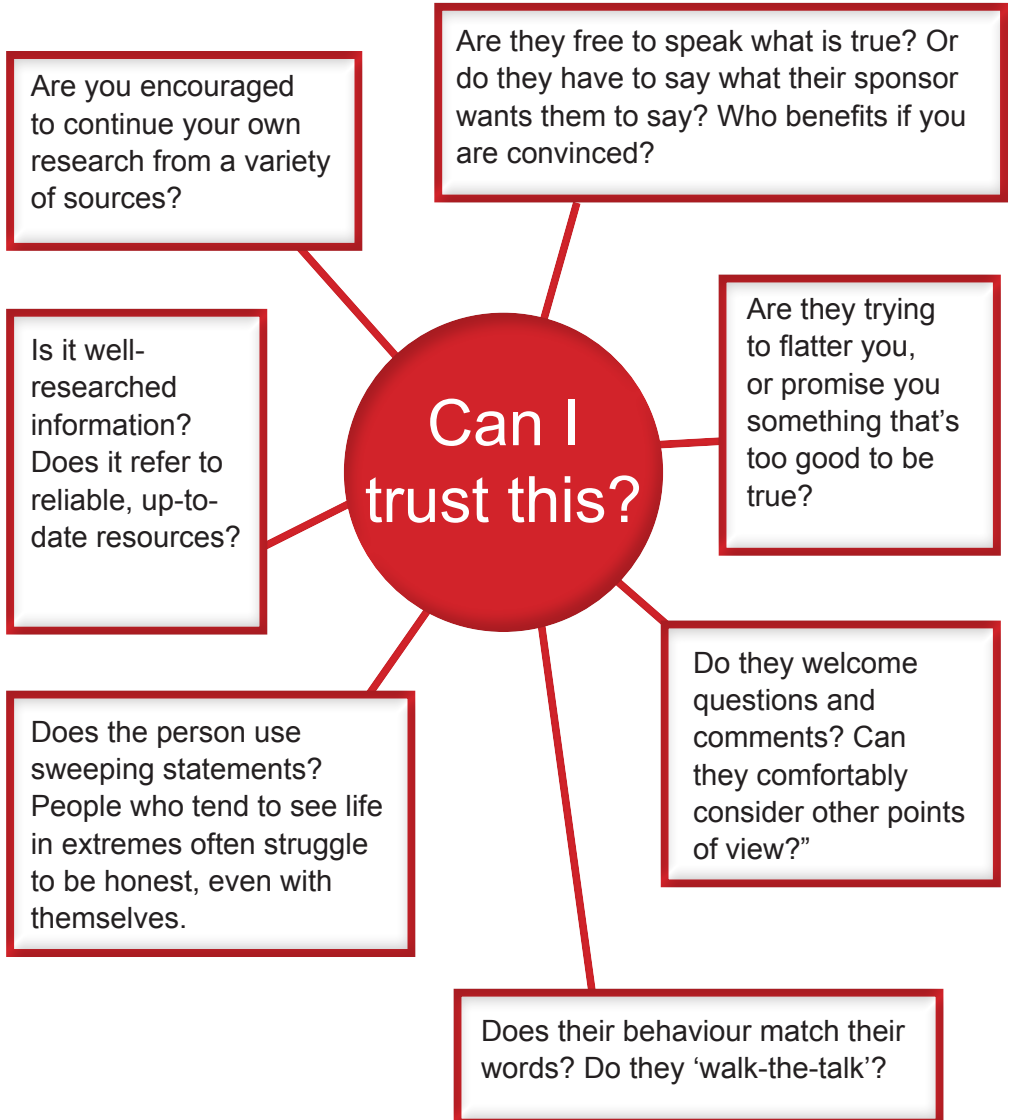




Show me your ways, Lord,
teach me your paths.
Guide me in your truth
and teach me,
for you are God my Saviour,
and my hope is in you
all day long. Psalm 25:4-5

Using critical thinking

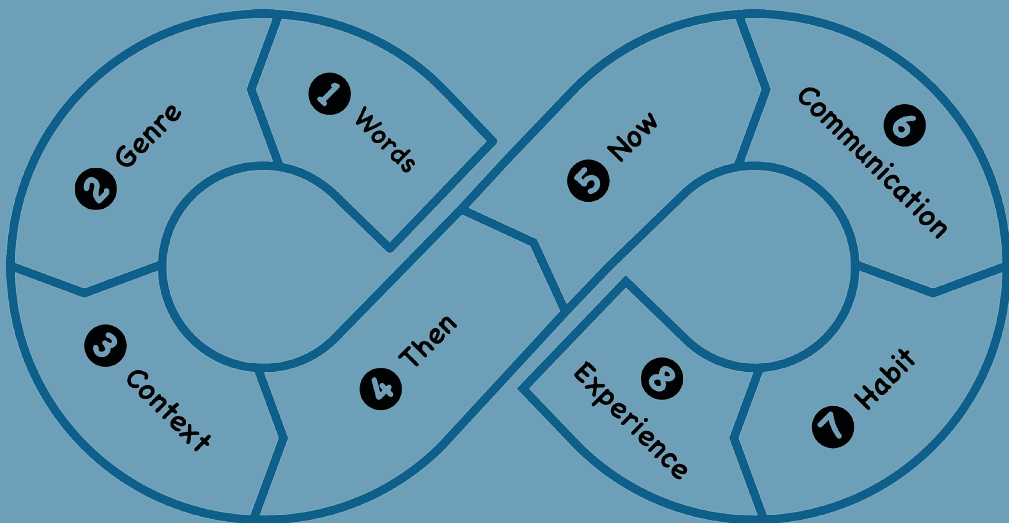
You come across some ideas online that you've not really considered before. How do you know if they are worth paying attention to?



Learning from the Bible

By Nathan Kitchen

It can be hard to understand the Bible because it was written a long time ago, by people from different cultures to us. How can we be confident that the original intended message is reaching us? Here are 8 aspects to think about when trying to learn from the Bible.



1. Words

Before arriving on the pages of our Bibles, the words were spoken, heard, and then written down and organised. Over hundreds of years, people preserved them by copying and translating them into different languages so that they could share the good news they contained. We must remember the journey that the words have taken and think carefully about what they mean. We can get a better

sense of the words by reading different Bible translations.

2. Genre

Different types (or 'genres') of documents have unspoken rules and structures. For example:

- **Poems** often rhyme or have a pattern
- **Parables** use symbols to explain difficult things

The Bible sometimes uses or changes these rules to make a point. For example, modern **letters** in the English-speaking world follow a pattern like this:

Dear Jim
I hope you are well.
I am writing to tell you...
Lots of love from
Bob

TO
GREETING
MESSAGE
BLESSING
FROM

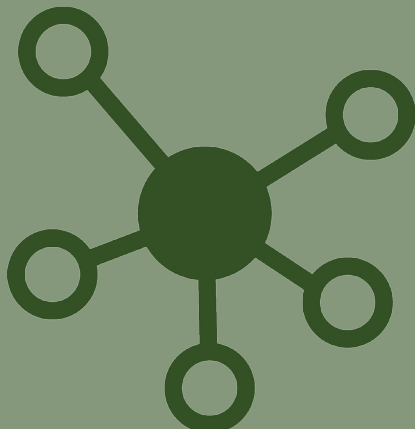


Letters in the ancient world had a similar format. The letters in the New Testament typically have a note of thanks at the beginning (e.g., Rom 1:8, 1 Cor 1:4). But Galatians doesn't! Imagine sitting with believers in Galatia, hearing a letter read out to you, and instead of a note of thanks, you hear "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you!"

3. Context

Learning about history and the ancient world helps us to make sense of the ideas we read about in the Bible. For example, Jesus told people, "If anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile" (Matt 5:41). The Romans had invaded and occupied the land of Israel, and the soldiers would often force people to carry their gear for them.

This context is important because it makes Jesus' words more surprising. Most people hated the Roman enemy, but Jesus tells them to willingly go beyond what was required and show kindness to them.





4. Then

Insights into words, genre, and history help us to understand the thought-world of the people God spoke to. When we bring all these together, we can start to hear its message as they did.

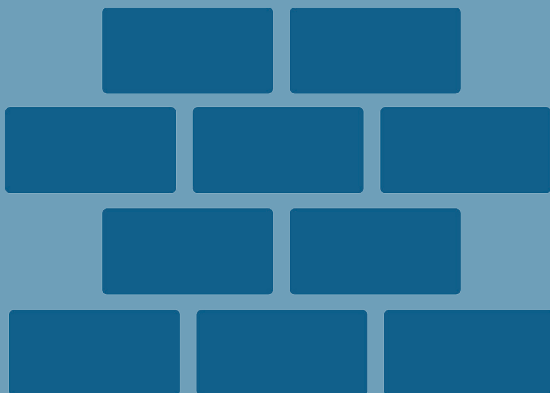
In the famous parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37), a man is beaten up and left for dead, and is rescued by a man from Samaria. An important piece of context is that Jews avoided passing through Samaritan lands because they thought its people were stupid and didn't worship God properly. When Jesus asks who the

neighbour was, the scribe who replies can't even bring himself to say "Samaritan"; he simply says, "He who showed him mercy" (Luke 10:37).

By bringing together all this background we now better understand the force of the parable to the people of the time. But what does it mean to us now?

5. Now

Today, we live very different lives to people in the Bible, and its teachings may seem distant to us. We need to find a path from the past to today in order to bridge this historical distance. While we may not know any Samaritans, perhaps we do know other similar groups of people who are disliked because of their history or ethnicity. Sometimes people are shunned because of the colour of their skin, or the job that they do. So although the Bible might not directly deal with subjects that are part of our lives today, we can still apply principles like love, respect, and faith in our own lives.



6. Communication

When we live out the Bible's message in our **behaviour** and **action**, we communicate our hope to others by the example that we set.

Listening is also a vital part of communication and deserves just as much—if not more—attention than what we say. The Bible contains many warnings about people who heard but did not listen and act. The parable of the wise and foolish builders (Matt 7:24) is a good example of this.



7. Habit

Practising what we've learned from the Bible forms good habits. These may be simple things like praying before bedtime or a meal, finding time to read the Bible, or taking time to think about God in our day-to-day lives. Perhaps the most important habit of all is putting others first: "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).

8. Experience

Over time, our habits build into experience. We have memories of when we behaved well or badly, and how our actions made things better or worse. It is important that we reflect on our life experience and learn from it. This may mean forgiving others, forgiving ourselves, or asking for forgiveness. The Bible does not tell us how to address specific situations in our lives, but it does equip us with the faith, hope, and wisdom to face them.



Case study: Family trees

Matthew 1 contains a genealogy (family tree) of Jesus. Have you ever noticed that there are people missing from it? Compare it with 1 Chronicles 3 and you will spot some differences. Does this mean that one of the genealogies is 'not true'? Or do we need to learn more about how people viewed genealogies back when the scriptures were written down?

"All genealogies, whether oral or written, are characterised by fluidity. Where two or more versions of the same genealogy exist, it is usually possible to detect changes... Fluidity may be crucial for understanding the genealogies and may indicate significant shifts in social relationships."

Robert R. Wilson, "Genealogy, Genealogies", ed. David Noel Freedman, The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary (New York: Doubleday, 1992), p.930-931

Digging deeper—recommended resources on truth, perspective, confidence and bias:

Approaching the Bible:

Bible Project videos:

- How to Read the Bible Series
 - starting with bibleproject.com/explore/video/what-is-bible
- Character of God Series
 - especially Faithful bibleproject.com/explore/video/faithful

Articles:

- Avoiding Bias by Richard Morgan
 - <https://tidings.org/articles/avoiding-bias/>

Bible Feed Podcasts:

- Founding a Faith with Dan Weatherall and Tom Gaston.
- Why are there four Gospels? with Dan Weatherall and Jon Davies.

Gospel Online YouTube video:

- Why we should believe the gospels summarises points which are explored in more detail in other videos.

Checking our perspective:

Press on Journal (video/audio/article):

- Beyond Religion by Karam Ram
 - pressonjournal.org/blog/beyond-religion

Talks:

- The truth dimension by Phil Lawrence
 - youtu.be/an0et83SwEI (Viewing the world through a different lens)

TRUTH

is Love in Action

By Sarah Joiner



As Christadelphians, we often talk about “the Truth” when we are referring to our beliefs. When someone asks the question: “Is she in the Truth?” we mean: “Is she baptized? Is she part of the Christadelphian community?”

“The truth” is one of John’s pet themes, but what does he mean by it?

Is our use of the phrase “the Truth” supported by scripture? Well, “the Truth” appears 86 times in the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible (NRSV) and often it just refers to people speaking the truth, rather than telling lies.

But one Bible writer uses this phrase more than any other.

John, in his gospels and letters, writes of “the truth” a grand total of 24 times. “The truth” is one of John’s pet themes, but what does he mean by it? John’s writing is often cryptic. See if you can work it out by looking at the selection of verses below:

“Jesus said: ‘There is another who testifies on my behalf, and I know that his testimony to

now on you do know him and have seen him” (John 14:5-7).

“Now by this we may be sure that we know him, if we obey his commandments.

Whoever says, ‘I have come to know him,’ but does not obey his commandments, is a liar, and in such a person the truth does not exist;

but whoever obeys his word, truly in this person the love of God has reached

perfection. By this we may be sure that we are in him: whoever says, ‘I abide in him,’ ought to walk just as he walked” (1 John 2:3-6).

“I was overjoyed to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we have been commanded by the Father” (2 John 4).

“I was overjoyed when some of the friends arrived and testified to your faithfulness to the truth, namely how you walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than this, to hear that my children are walking in the truth” (3 John 1:3-4).



me is true. You sent messengers to John, and he testified to the truth. Not that I accept such human testimony, but I say these things so that you may be saved” (John 5:32-34*).

“Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, ‘If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free’” (John 8:31-33).

“Jesus said: ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From

“The truth” is... the Lord
Jesus Christ himself.



From this selection, we
can see that “the truth”
is:

- Testified to by John the Baptist—that Jesus is the Messiah
- Something that you can know
- Something that will make you free
- Jesus Christ
- Inside us if we obey Jesus’ commands
- An action—walking in truth, walking as Jesus did


So “the Truth” is not just a set of facts, a set of beliefs—it is the Lord Jesus Christ himself and it is following him, being set free by him. It is not just about what we believe, but how we believe—our whole way of life. It is our response to God’s love. Truth is love in action.



* Scripture quotations are from New Revised Standard Version Bible: Anglicized Edition, copyright 1989, 1995 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.



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t	d	o	h	j	e	d	q	w	a	e	y
r	y	k	h	m	e	n	h	r	i	h	e
u	d	e	w	c	e	s	s	d	t	y	a
t	s	d	e	c	n	r	g	r	h	p	u
h	y	i	j	f	e	a	o	b	f	o	i
t	v	r	t	l	d	w	f	c	u	c	l
e	b	e	g	j	t	h	g	v	l	r	k
m	g	d	e	s	l	a	f	b	n	i	c
q	w	y	u	i	o	p	i	n	e	t	o
a	r	r	r	t	e	i	l	b	s	e	r
e	t	e	w	s	a	x	c	v	s	s	p



Here are 10 quotes (from the NIV Bible), each with a missing word. Find the missing words in the wordsearch.

God can be trusted

1. "The hope of eternal life, which God, who does not ____, promised before the beginning of time" (Titus 1:2)
2. "We have this hope as an _____ for the soul, firm and secure" (Hebrews 6:19)
3. "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and _____" (Exodus 34:6)
4. "Oh, praise the greatness of our God! He is the _____, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just." (Deuteronomy 32:4)
5. "We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and _____." (John 1:14)

Self-awareness and honesty

6. "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you _____; as it is written: 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.'" (Mark 7:6)
7. "Do not merely listen to the word, and so _____ yourselves. Do what it says." (James 1:22)
8. "The _____ is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark." (James 3:5)
9. "A gossip betrays a confidence, but a _____ person keeps a secret." (Proverbs 11:13)
10. "Watch out for _____ prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognise them." (Matthew 7:15-16)

THINK

BEFORE YOU SPEAK

By Ewan MacLeod

Jesus said, “The mouth speaks what the heart is full of. A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken.” (Matthew 12:34-36).

things. We pick up only on the interesting bits, and we spread the story as if it was true. “The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly” (Proverbs 18:8, KJV). Words can hurt. If we hear something about someone second-hand, the chances are that it is not entirely true. Bits of it may

So we must THINK before we speak. To help us with this, we can think of the letters that make up the word

THINK. Because of the theme of this issue, we will focus on the first one: T – TRUE. Is what we are about to say True? Even if we’re not deliberately lying, we probably don’t know the Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth. We know only what we have been told. We remember only what we want to remember. And we don’t know what is in peoples’ hearts. So like Chinese whispers, we hear

If we hear something about someone second-hand, the chances are that it is not entirely true.

be true, but it represents only one viewpoint. If necessary, we should always speak to the person directly, and not rely on second-hand stories. So if someone starts to gossip in front of you, remember that you do not have to listen. You can interrupt and say, “You do not need to tell me any more of this”.

This is an edited version of a longer article from the Christadelphian Isolation League magazine, Issue 170: isolationleague.org/magazine.

Before you speak:

THINK



T

– Is it true?

H

– Is it helpful?

I

– Is it inspiring?

N

– Is it necessary?

K

– Is it kind?

Welcome to the Metaverse!

Many of us are spending an increasing amount of our time in a virtual world – a highly edited, filtered version of life, where it is easy to show only the best aspects of ourselves. We can lose touch with what is true, and have unrealistic expectations of ourselves and others. This pressure can be harmful to our mental well-being. So it's important to notice what stories are being fed to us, and to be aware of what messages we are feeding to others.

If someone gets to know you through your online profile, and then they meet you in person, will they recognise you by your appearance and values? Or is your online persona so filtered and curated that they don't feel like they are meeting the same person?

Think about how you can be more authentic online. To get you started, try listening to this Christian song on YouTube: Truth Be Told by Matthew West and Carly Pearce.

